

THE CO-ORDINATION OF THE RECORDS OF BIRTHS, MARRIAGES AND DEATHS*

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

THERE are occasions in the lives of all individuals comprising the population of this country when an official of some department of the central or local government registers certain facts concerning them. An infant is weighed and measured in an infant welfare clinic of the public health authority. A school-child is inspected and records are kept of the condition of the teeth, sight or hearing. Particulars of the occupation and industrial history of an insured person are noted through the medium of the employment exchange. Inquiry into family income is made of applicants for public assistance. These are a few of many examples which might be cited, but none of these records embraces the whole population. In this they differ from the decennial census which takes in every family in the land. It was understood that, starting from 1936, the Census would be repeated in some measure every fifth year—but that is now a hope deferred.

Here then is a vast accumulation of valuable material produced periodically or spasmodically. But, owing chiefly to the manner in which the various departments came into being, some quite independently of the rest, with a few notable exceptions no attempt is made to co-ordinate the publications which issue from them and the consequence is that their realised value is very much less than their potential value. Had the different departments all started together, no doubt such co-ordination would have been achieved.

Apart from the national Census, in the

experience of each one of us at least two and possibly three outstanding events are registered officially. We have all been born ; we shall all die ; and between the alpha and the inevitable omega there is a more problematical event : we may or we may not marry. Since 1875 the registration of these three events has been compulsory, in the sense that penalties could be imposed for failure to register, and my purpose is to show that, by taking these records and amplifying them slightly with a view to linking them together, it should be possible in course of time to amass information that would throw a flood of light on many social problems. The further possibility of a closer co-ordination between the registration and the Census returns, and between them and other central and local statistics, is evident but the present discussion will be confined to proposals for making fuller use of the registration material alone as a first step.

EXISTING REGISTRATION SYSTEM

At present the registration of a birth, a marriage, or a death is an isolated event, although in any selected district the same officer is usually responsible for registering births and deaths and he may be responsible for registering marriages also. In a large area several registration officers are appointed, each in charge of a sub-district but all working in consultation with a superintendent registrar who is responsible for a group of sub-districts, and whose business it is to check the entries which are made on the registration forms. Such records, with corresponding data from other districts, form the basis of important tables which the Registrar-General presents to the public in Quarterly Returns and an Annual Statistical Review.

These tables give us the totals of births,

* An account of the proposals contained in this article as originally drafted was given on November 23rd, 1934, to a small Group Meeting of the Manchester Statistical Society, and a summary of them has been published in the records of the Group Meetings.

marriages and deaths, or, in conjunction with information derived from the Census, their rates in relation to the population, by sex and age from year to year, and in regard to death a mass of detail as to alleged causes. But the attention throughout is focused on the individual as unit—it is the sum of individual births, marriages and deaths that is determined; whereas, by directing attention to the family as unit, fresh results of great interest might be derived from an analysis of much the same material.

Under present arrangements all births are recorded locally, in the order in which they are registered, in bound volumes each containing 500 names and the volumes are stored on shelves in order of date. Copies, certified by the signatures of the local registrars concerned to be true copies, of these records are sent to the Registrar-General once a quarter on loose sheets containing five birth registrations to a sheet. These sheets, bound together and arranged by year, quarter and district, form a duplicate permanent register of births which is kept in the vaults of Somerset House. The virtue of this second register is that it is centralized whereas the original is scattered.

In addition to the certified copy of the birth registration sheets sent to the Registrar-General at the end of the quarter, two carbon copies are sent up monthly of all completed sheets. One set of these carbons is used to compile periodical vital statistics; by means of the other, a set of abbreviated copies, a beginning is made with the methodical arrangement of the births from all districts throughout the country for each quarter in alphabetical order according to the surnames and the Christian names of the infants. Any member of the public who wishes to trace a birth, knowing the name and the date when the birth took place, will readily find it by means of this admirably simple device of an alphabetical Index which, when completed, records also the names of the parents and gives a cross-reference to the volume and page of the Central Register containing full particulars of the birth. It should be added that the public have direct access to the Index but not to the Central Register. If a

copy of the birth registration form were required it would be made by a member of the General Register Office staff on payment of the usual fee.

The procedure in regard to deaths and marriages is very similar; for these also an alphabetical index is compiled, which again gives a cross reference to the volume and page of the death or marriage register where detailed particulars of the event are to be found.

A FAMILY REGISTER

Regarding the family as the pivot on which the extension of the present system is to turn, it is proposed that, in addition to the three existing registers of birth, marriage and death, a fourth register should be maintained which might be called the Family Register. It would differ from the other three in that it would have its origin at the Central General Register Office; it would be built up entirely from information derived from these other registers; it would contain no clue to the identity of the individuals to whom it related: to discover who they were it would be necessary to refer back to the original registers; and it would be filed on a card index system, one card for each separate family. It will be immediately seen that the new system is not revolutionary: the intention is not to scrap existing machinery but to develop it and make fuller use of it. One or two additional questions are proposed at each registration, but otherwise no essential alteration is suggested in the form and content of the Birth, Marriage and Death Registers.

If the family cards were filed by the year to which they relate, and, within each year, alphabetically by district where registration took place, comparison would be possible between one year and another and between one area and another. In this respect they would conform exactly to the general plan defining the order of arrangement of the other registers. Within each district or division of a district the cards could be arranged alphabetically by surname and Christian name(s) of the male head of the family. Finally, individuals with the same

initial letters, married in the same district and within the same quarter-year, could be numbered in the order of marriage registration.

Each family card when complete would contain particulars of the birth, marriage and death of the man and woman who by their union founded the family; it would contain particulars of the birth of each child; and it would also contain particulars of *either* the death *or* the marriage of each child whichever event occurred first (if both occurred). As soon as a child grew up and married, he (or she) would found a new family and his (or her) story would then be continued on a new card. In the same way, to pursue the history of the parents backwards in time from the date of their marriage, it would be necessary to refer to the cards containing records of the two families founded by the four grandparents. Every person in short would appear on the family card of his (or her) parents and, in addition, on the family card which he (or she) in turn initiated on marriage. If more than one union were contracted by the same person, that person should appear on three or more family cards.

The procedure contemplated would be somewhat as follows: At the end of each quarter, when the certified copies of the marriage registers reached Somerset House from different parts of the country, after the Marriage Index had been compiled and the usual statistical analysis for the quarter was completed, the records before being filed away would be sent to the department responsible for the preparation of the new family register so that a family card might be made out for each marriage. On the back of the family card would be marked the volume and page of the Marriage Register—the source of the information about the marriage given on the card. In due course, if children were born, the birth registration forms would also reach Somerset House, and, when all that is now done with these forms had been done, they in turn—along with all the birth forms relating to the same quarter—would be sent to the Family Registration Department. It will be assumed for the moment that the answers to the questions asked when the birth was registered were reasonably

complete and accurate; that being so, there should be no difficulty, as will be seen when the birth registration form is discussed, in tracing, with the help of the Index to Marriages, the family card of the parents of the newly born infant. On the front of this family card certain particulars about the birth would then be recorded, and at the same time a cross-reference would be given on the back of the card to the volume and page of the Birth Register whence the information had been abstracted. In the same way, when any member of the family died or married, the death or marriage registration form would be sent to Somerset House and these forms, if adequately completed as in the great majority of cases they should be, would contain clues to the related family cards and the family cards could thus be brought up to date in regard to these events, cross references to their source being given at the back as before.

It should be observed that a death, like a birth, would only need to be recorded on one family card: the death of an unmarried person would be recorded on the family card of his (or her) parents, but the death of a married person would be recorded on the family card relating to his (or her) own (last) marriage. A marriage would normally be recorded on the family card of the parents of both the married persons, and at the same time it would start a fresh family card on its own account. In short, by the plan above outlined, the term family would be restricted to parents and their children—two generations only—and, when their vital history was complete, the family card would contain, on the back, cross references to the birth and death (or subsequent re-marriage) forms of the two parents and the birth and marriage (or death) forms of each child. Except by going back to these registration forms there would be no means of identifying the family concerned. The precise nature of the information to be found on the front of the card will be explained presently.

BIRTH

It will be convenient now to turn back to consider the questions asked when a birth,

marriage or death is registered. It is proposed that the information required at the registration of a birth should be as follows :

REGISTRATION OF BIRTH

1. Date
2. Place (full address)
3. Live or still
4. Single or multiple
5. Sex
6. Name
7. Name and surname of father
8. Name and maiden surname of mother
9. Marriage of father and mother : place (name and address of church or registry office) and date
10. Occupation and industry of father at birth of child (If unemployed, give last occupation)
11. Occupation (if any) and industry of mother at birth of child

Answers are required to questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 at present when a birth is registered. Also the occupation of the father is given, but with a view to greater precision it is suggested that the industry should be stated in addition ; for example, a man may be employed as a clerk in a bank, or a shipping office, or a retail store. For co-ordination with the Census and Ministry of Labour records it would be reasonable to adopt the same broad classification in regard to occupation and industry as that which is used for these other purposes.

The registration of still-births has been compulsory only since 1927, and they are recorded in a separate register ; in due course, as these statistics accumulate, they may throw important light on factors affecting general infant mortality. Incidentally, it is worth noting that the definition of a still-birth is not the same in all countries and this in consequence affects the comparability of statistics of live births. Through the medium of the International Statistical Institute a standard classification of causes of death has been agreed by statisticians and is in use in the more important European countries : it would be well worth while to aim at corresponding agreement in regard to the definition of still-births, and in fact the whole subject and machinery of registration.

Returning to the list of questions proposed at the registration of a birth, question 4 is important because suitably directed research

on twin and multiple births has helped and may still further help towards the solution of problems which are of peculiar interest to biologists. The answer to question 9 should make it possible to connect the birth of the child directly with the marriage of the parents by reference to the Index of Marriages ; and answers to the last two questions would indicate whether any change had occurred in the occupational class of the parents since their marriage. When there had been pre-nuptial conception there might be hesitation in giving the date of marriage. The question of the date, however, need not be pressed ; the parents might indeed be informed—if they showed any reluctance in replying—that the answer to this question was purely voluntary. Hesitation would only be likely if marriage had occurred within the previous nine months, and in all probability the marriage would be registered in the same district as the birth and could be traced locally. The registrar could indicate this type of case by a note attached to the form. Knowing the place and approximate date of marriage, and the names of the contracting parties, it should be a simple matter at the Central Office to trace the marriage certificate.

Parents should be informed that a copy of the birth certificate might have to be produced at death, or marriage, or on some other important occasion in the life of the individual, and they should be encouraged therefore to take and carefully keep a copy. It could be given to them free of cost or the customary small charge could be made for it.

MARRIAGE

In the Marriage Register it is suggested that the following particulars should be recorded :

REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGE

1. Date
2. Place (name and address of church or registry office)
3. Name of husband (A.B.)
4. Name of wife (C.D., late C.E., previously C.F., previously C.G., formerly C.H.)
5. Occupation and industry of husband (If unemployed, give last occupation)
6. Occupation (if any) and industry of wife

7. Birth of husband, date and place
8. Birth of wife, date and place
9. Relationship of husband and wife, if related by blood
10. Previous marriages* of husband :
 - i. date and place
 - ii. date and place
11. Previous marriages of wife :
 - i. date and place
 - ii. date and place
12. Last home address of husband
13. Last home address of wife

The first four of the foregoing questions are asked now when marriage is contracted. Also, the rank or profession of husband and wife, their ages, and the occupations of their fathers have to be stated; questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 are designed to elicit, in part indirectly, this same information in a more satisfactory manner. Questions 5 and 6 are in line with the corresponding questions asked at birth and death and they are expressed in the same form. Questions 7 and 8 would suffice not only to give the ages of husband and wife at marriage, but would enable them also to be traced in the Birth Registration file, which would give in addition information as to their parents including their occupational class. It is probably of greater interest to know the rank or profession of the parents at the period when their children are born than at the period when their children marry. Both partners to the marriage might well be required to produce copies of their birth certificates for inspection when the marriage is registered. If this were done one could be reasonably sure that the answers to questions 7 and 8 were accurate. Assuming a somewhat hazy knowledge of date and place of birth, the local registrar might offer his services for a small fee in tracing the particulars. The fee could be fixed by regulation: it should not be much more than the cost of search at Somerset House. Question 9 has been included because a systematic study of the offspring of consanguineous matings is calculated to assist in the solution

* Illegal unions, if they have resulted in the foundation of a family, should be included under (10) and (11) when the information is available. The appropriate date and place would in such cases be the date and place of birth of the first child to the union.

of important problems of human heredity. Answers to questions 10 and 11 should prevent confusion between different marriages contracted by the same individuals, and the history of these earlier marriages also could be explored once the dates when and the places where they took place were known. The home address of each partner to the marriage is also required at present and this, though not essential, may still be useful in order to make contact with husband or wife again if necessary. A copy of the Marriage Certificate should be given to each of the contracting parties on registration either free or at a nominal charge. If a marriage is legally dissolved, otherwise than by death, it should be the duty of some official of the law court concerned to send to Somerset House a note of the names of the parties to the marriage, the date and place of marriage, and the date and court of dissolution. The fact could then be recorded on the Marriage Register and the family cards.

DEATH

Proceeding now to the Death Register the following questions are proposed:

REGISTRATION OF DEATH

1. Date (age at death)
2. Place (full address)
3. Sex
4. Name and surname
5. Cause
6. Occupation and industry at death (If unemployed, give last occupation)
7. Date and place of birth and name at registration of birth
8. If married, date and place of (last) marriage; or, failing this, full name of partner to marriage (if dead), giving place and year of death.

Answers to the first five of these questions are supplied already at death. Also, the (last) occupation of the deceased is stated, but for greater accuracy, as before, the industry has been included in question 6. The registrar could fill in the answers to questions 7 and 8 if it were required that a copy of the birth certificate, assuming the deceased person single, or the (last) marriage certificate, assuming the deceased person married, had to be produced for inspection within a few days of the

registration of death. To avoid delay the local registrar himself might send for a copy of the certificate to Somerset House, if the relatives were unable to produce one, and charge a small approved sum for his services. The parents or other relatives would in most cases be able to state the place and year of birth of an unmarried person. In the case of a married person, assuming one partner to the marriage still alive, the place and year of marriage would almost certainly be known. If the other partner to the marriage were not alive, it would serve the purpose equally well if a copy of the death certificate of the partner first deceased were produced; the year and place of death would be more likely to be known to the surviving relatives than the year and place of marriage: given the place of death, it should suffice indeed if the year were known even approximately.

There would undoubtedly be some elderly persons, married and unmarried, with no known living relations, for whom it would prove impossible to insert the particulars desired on the Death Register, but the proportion of such cases is not likely to be large. It could not be expected indeed that every record would be complete and accurate in a scheme which was of universal application, but a closer approach to completeness and accuracy might be anticipated year by year—that has been our experience with the existing records of vital statistics. Moreover, the fact that some of the returns could not be used would not make the rest valueless. If we had waited to calculate birth and death rates, marriage and sickness rates, until our returns were complete we should be waiting still. It would certainly make for greater accuracy if birth certificates had to be produced at marriage and if birth or marriage certificates had to be produced at death. This is not an unreasonable proposal, nor is it one that would inflict any very great hardship or inconvenience on those concerned; marriage and death are both important events in a person's history and it is right that the regulations governing their registration should be strict enough to ensure the accuracy of the records so far as is humanly possible.

ILLEGITIMACY

The case of an illegitimate birth requires special consideration. Any union, whether legal or otherwise, *that results in issue* must be regarded as the foundation of a family, and a fresh family card should be made out for every such additional union.* An illegitimate union should be registered as starting at the date of the birth of the first child to the union. Question 9 in the Birth Register would be left blank unless and until the parents subsequently married. In rare cases of illegitimacy it might prove impossible to fill in replies to more than one or two questions on the form. Quite frequently the name of the father would not be disclosed. It follows that the "family" card relating to an illegitimate union would in many cases be incomplete though not by any means altogether without value.

THE FAMILY

We are now in a position to consider the nature of the information to be recorded on the family card. It is to be specially noted that all its contents are obtained shortly after the occurrence of a birth, marriage, or death, and as soon as the forms recording these events reach the Central Office and can be dealt with there. The time lag between the event and its registration on the family card should be as short as possible.

It is suggested that the card might be designed on the following lines, taking a purely imaginary illustration:

REGISTRATION OF FAMILY

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Date | 2. Registration district |
| 3. Rel. C.C. | 4. Mar. H. (1 div.); W. (o) |
| 5. M ₁ F ₁ F ₂ F ₃ | |
| 6. H. 27-9 | |
| W. 22-6; 23-11, 25-8, 28-7, 32-10 | |
| 7. H. taxi-driver; taxi-driver, motor mechanic, ditto, ditto; pen. | |
| W. shop assistant (grocery stores) | |
| 8. H. reg; U, reg, reg, cas.; cas. | |
| 9. H. 67-4 | cause of death |
| | M ₁ 19-2 cause of death |
| W. 72-1 | cause of death |
| | F ₃ 1-3 cause of death |

* The distinction drawn here between an illegal union and a marriage is that a family card is to be made out for *every marriage*, whether children are born to the marriage or not.

10. M., fitter (engineering) reg.

11. F₁ 23-5 F₂ 27-8
 postman (reg.) general labourer (U)

A marriage takes place at a certain date and is registered in a certain district. These two facts are recorded first. If husband and wife were cousins, that would be indicated in (3). The man may have been married before and divorced as shown in (4). Ages of husband and wife at marriage (27 years 9 months and 22 years 6 months, respectively) are given in (6). The occupations of each, also at marriage, appear in (7), and if the husband's work was of a kind that would be normally classed as regular, that is recorded in (8). As children are born—one boy, followed by three girls, assumed in this case—that is shown in (5); the age of the wife at each birth is recorded in (6), and the occupation of the husband in (7). The fact that the husband was unemployed at the birth of the first child is noted in (8). The ages of husband and wife at death and cause of death are given in (9). The same information is given also for any children who die before marriage; here it is assumed that the son and one daughter die young. The father was in receipt of a pension at death (See (7)) but was still engaged in work of a casual character (See (8)). The son's occupation at death is given in (10); also the occupations of the husbands of the two married daughters at the time of marriage are shown in (11).

MATERIAL FOR RESEARCH

On the back of the card, as already explained, would appear the cross-reference links with the birth, marriage and death-cards of the various members of the family. A random sample of the family cards could therefore be taken from the file and analysed by a responsible authority, interested in some special problem, without any knowledge by name of the particular families whose vital history is recorded on the cards: the investigation would be quite impersonal. In due course one could measure with greater precision than is at present possible the relation of the decline in the birth-rate—if it continue to decline—to the ages of the parents, the duration of marriage, occupational class. What is the difference in such respects between one generation and the next? Is it consistent within each class?

Similar inquiries could be prosecuted in regard to death-rates, and, in particular, infant and maternal mortality. What is the bearing of the decline in births upon the rate of mortality of infants and mothers? Is

it true that more mothers die because the first confinement is the most difficult, and there is an increasing proportion of first births because families are smaller than they were? It would be a simple matter, by taking a random sample of family cards, to determine the proportion of maternal deaths at first, second, third, and subsequent confinements.

Again, to what extent do marriages occur between persons of different social class and is there any sex difference in this class relation? Do persons tend to re-marry in certain occupational groups more frequently than in others, and what relation has age to re-marriage? More attention has been paid in the past to the statistics of birth and death than to marriage statistics. Consequently there is a rich harvest here waiting to be garnered, especially when we consider also the data that might be analysed in regard to human fertility for which suitable statistics on a large scale are scanty. How does the chance of a birth depend upon the age of the wife? That seems a simple question and the answer to it has a greater influence upon the size of family than is appreciated until it is examined; yet only one large sample of really reliable English figures exists on the subject and it dates back to the 1911 Census. But, assuming that records were assembled in a Central Office on the plan here outlined, it should be possible to collect within a comparatively short time comprehensive data establishing the average relation of fertility to ages of both husband and wife, the mean intervals of time after marriage between successive births, the variation with age in the tendency to single or multiple, live or still, births, and the effect upon all such figures of differences in the occupational class of the parents. The association between fertility and age among married women is clearly of the first importance to statisticians trying to estimate the future population, and now that we are approaching the stage of a serious decline in population the problem is one that is bound to receive public attention. We take stock of our material possessions from time to time; still more ought we to concern ourselves about the quantity and the

quality of the people who are the true wealth of the country.

ESTIMATED COST OF SCHEME

It may be worth while to add a rough estimate—and it can only be rough—of the cost of the additional clerical work in the Central Office called for by the proposed new development. In Great Britain in 1931 there were 724,301 births, 555,859 deaths, and 344,516 marriages, making a total of 1,624,676 registrations in the year. Allowing 48 weeks of $5\frac{1}{2}$ working days in the year, this would give a total of 264 working days. Hence the mean number of registrations per working day would be 6,154. Each registration would involve the insertion of a few straightforward entries on an old or new family card. If we suppose that one clerk could be responsible for an average of 60 registrations in a day, it follows that the number of additional clerks required would be about 100. The labour would not be highly skilled. If the pay were estimated at £3 a week, the total cost would be about £15,000 a year.

But this procedure envisages one clerk undertaking the several stages relating to each registration, whereas in practice it would no doubt be possible so to organize and subdivide the work as to reduce the labour and cost appreciably. Supervision and establishment charges are not included in the above estimate.

PART II MIGRATION

The case already made out for the co-ordination of the records of birth, marriage and death can be discussed on its merits quite apart from the proposals which follow in regard to Migration. But, in order to make the scheme theoretically watertight, while fully recognizing the practical human limitations to which it is subject, I have been tempted to go on to explore the problem of registration as it is affected by people entering or leaving the country. For a really adequate system to meet all difficulties it would be necessary for the Governments of

different countries to come to an agreement to interchange data in regard to migrants on some common plan. Preliminary steps have been taken to achieve this with some measure of success through the initiative of such bodies as the International Labour Office and the International Statistical Institute. But it will be well to devise a scheme which does not assume as a practical possibility any agreement so comprehensive as to embrace all countries in the immediate future.

TRAVELLERS

The scheme must clearly differentiate between persons who enter this country (or who go abroad) only as visitors, on business or pleasure, who may be termed travellers, and those who enter (or leave) the country with no intention of returning—the true migrants. It is suggested that every person entering (or leaving) Great Britain on a visit by sea or air should be required before leaving the port of landing (or departure) to complete a Traveller's Identity Card, copies of which should be obtainable in every British passenger boat or plane and at every British sea and air port. Exceptions should only be made in the case of crew and officers engaged in navigating or piloting ship or plane, and in the case of passengers leaving and returning to a British port by the same ship or plane in the one voyage. The master or chief pilot should be responsible for reporting particulars of any change in crew or passengers in such a case.

TRAVELLER'S IDENTITY CARD

1. Date of registration
2. Sex
3. Name
4. Name as registered at birth
5. Date of birth
6. Place of birth (full address)
7. Home address
8. Visiting address
9. Probable duration of visit, if likely to exceed six months.

For his own protection the traveller might be advised to include also his photograph and finger prints but this would be purely voluntary.

Identity cards would have code numbers stamped on them to distinguish the port of

departure (or arrival) and, on completion, they would be kept in a special Travellers' File, one for inward and one for outward visitors, alphabetically by name and by date of birth for persons of the same name. Each traveller should receive a duplicate copy of his card which would serve as his passport on leaving (or re-entering) this country later. If he should lose it, he should be obliged to pay, say, five shillings and complete a fresh card, giving the same particulars as before. To impersonate a traveller should be regarded as a serious offence liable to result in imprisonment or a heavy fine. The duplicate (or the copy of it, as the case might be) should be cancelled along with the original form after establishing correspondence between them on the traveller's return. The files should be inspected periodically, and a courteous communication (with prepaid postage for reply) sent to each person more than three months overdue,* asking for the new home address should there be no intention of returning to the previous home. Assuming no reply received after a further three months, the traveller should be provisionally treated as a true migrant, but every effort should be made to confirm permanent residence.

IMMIGRANTS

The true immigrant is a person who enters the country with the intention of remaining permanently, and in practice it is not uncommon for Governments to define "permanence" as meaning a period longer than a year. The responsibility should be laid upon such persons to complete, at or before entry, a birth registration form and also, if married, a marriage registration form, assuming no such forms had already been completed as the result of residence in the country at some earlier period. No change need be made in the ordinary birth or marriage registration form to suit the particular case of immigrants, but their family cards for a period of years should be filed separately in order to facilitate analysis. It is probable that the

answers to some of the questions relating to immigrants would be less trustworthy, because the facts would be recorded some time after the events to which they refer. For instance, an adult should be able to give date and place of birth and names of parents; but date and place of marriage of parents and their occupations might not be known with certainty. If the parents had been married in this country, the year and place being known, the particulars could be readily checked; on the other hand, if, as would be more likely, the marriage was contracted abroad, the date would be of less interest and their uncertainty of less importance. In that event, questions 9, 10 and 11 on the Birth Registration Form might be omitted altogether without much loss, the word *Abroad* being stamped against them to cancel them.

Assuming the immigrant himself married, his marriage, too, was either contracted in this country and the facts concerning it should be entered already in the Marriage Register; or it was contracted abroad, and most, if not all, of the particulars desired about it should be within the knowledge of the parties to the marriage; although again, owing to the lapse of time between the events and the recording of them, it is probable that there might be an element of uncertainty about some of the entries.

In order to secure prompt registration, attention should be drawn to the forms—which, like the travellers' cards, should be available on board all British ships and planes carrying passengers and at each port of landing—and facilities should be provided for completing them before the passengers land or before they leave the port for their inland destinations.

Assuming the forms were not satisfactorily completed in any essential particular, the immigrant should be required to state his address and to present himself once a week at the office of the nearest Superintendent Registrar until the required information was obtained. Failing this, he should be treated as an alien and reported to the police. An appropriate penalty should be exacted from anyone convicted of neglecting

* For this purpose travellers who did not answer question 9 should be treated as due to return three months after the date of departure (or arrival).

to take steps to complete registration within seven days' residence in the country or knowingly making any false statement in registering. If such procedure were not considered to be a sufficient safeguard against the "dumping" of undesired aliens in this country, photographs and fingerprints could be taken before they were permitted to leave the port of landing.

EMIGRANTS

The true emigrant who intends to leave the country permanently should be required to fill up a form exactly similar to the Traveller's Card already described, except for the last three questions.

EMIGRATION FORM

1. Date
2. Sex
3. Name
4. Name as registered at birth
5. Date of birth
6. Place of birth (full address)
7. Last home address
8. Future home address (i.e. town or district and country)
9. Occupation and industry (If unemployed, state last occupation)

These forms should be forwarded direct to the Central Register Office and filed in a separate file. The following particulars, in regard to themselves or their children as the case may require, typed on a thin yellow card and clipped to the appropriate family registration card, would then explain why there was no entry later recording the deaths of the individuals concerned.

Emigrated to (destination) on (date)
Occupation and industry at date of emigration
(If unemployed, state last occupation)

The yellow clipped card would make the cards containing entries relating to emigrants easy to identify. Should an emigrant decide later to return to this country it would still be possible to insert any necessary particulars on the original family registration card. Also, a note could be added to the emigration form:

Returned to Great Britain (date)

Such persons could be readily distinguished from travellers because no Traveller's Card would be made out for them. They would accordingly be treated as immigrants, but

it would be unnecessary to duplicate their birth or marriage forms if already made out before emigration. They would, therefore, be required merely to call at the office of the nearest Superintendent Registrar to arrange for the completion of their registration.

THE RELATION OF VITAL STATISTICS TO OTHER LOCAL RECORDS

I have intentionally confined my remarks in this paper to the subject of registration, but a moment's reflection will suggest the almost unlimited scope for research which would follow by combining these foundation statistics, once they were in suitable and accessible form, with other records in the possession of different departments of the national or local authorities. One could pick out all the cards relating to families of a particular class in a given district, where, for instance, the head of the family was in receipt of public assistance or unemployment insurance, or where the children were getting free dinners or had gained free places in school, and they could be studied from various angles. This more intimate type of inquiry could only be made, of course, with the clear understanding that no information would be disclosed in regard to any individual family. The use of the family cards for the purpose would really ensure this. General principles and controlling factors alone would be explored and their average effects exposed. Answers to such questions as those previously suggested (See page 203) concerning the birth, marriage, and mortality of a random sample drawn from the normal population—would provide standards with which the experience of the random sample drawn from a selected class could be compared.

It is unnecessary to elaborate further the immense variety of problems which might be discussed as a result of the co-ordination and centralisation of the raw material of our main vital statistics. Enough has been said, perhaps, to emphasize the lack of economy in making the laborious collection of registration data on a universal scale compulsory, and in the failure to take the short additional step essential to get the full benefit out of it.